

The Elements of Style

THE
ELEMENTS
OF
Style

BY
WILLIAM STRUNK Jr.

*With Revisions, an Introduction,
and a Chapter on Writing*

BY
E. B. WHITE

FOURTH EDITION



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2. *In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma after each term except the last.*

Thus write,

red, white, and blue
gold, silver, or copper

He opened the letter, read it, and made a note of its contents.

This comma is often referred to as the “serial” comma. In the names of business firms the last comma is usually omitted. Follow the usage of the individual firm.

Little, Brown and Company
Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette

3. *Enclose parenthetical expressions between commas.*

The best way to see a country, unless you are pressed for time, is to travel on foot.

This rule is difficult to apply; it is frequently hard to decide whether a single word, such as *however*, or a brief phrase is or is not parenthetical. If the interruption to the flow of the sentence is but slight, the commas may be safely omitted. But whether the interruption is slight or considerable, never omit one comma and leave the other. There is no defense for such punctuation as

Marjorie’s husband, Colonel Nelson paid us a visit yesterday.

or

My brother you will be pleased to hear, is now in perfect health.

Dates usually contain parenthetical words or figures. Punctuate as follows:

February to July, 1992